

# Facebook Happiness

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## INTRODUCTION

The increased usage of technology in our business and personal lives has been one of the most important trends in the past decade. Some of the most drastic changes in how people spend their time are around social networks. However, these social networks may impact people's emotional states in negative ways.

As the world's largest social networking site, Facebook has over 1.5 billion monthly active users around the globe. People go on Facebook because they want to connect with their friends and families. People want to find happiness on Facebook, but will they?



## AIM

The purpose of this research is to measure how Facebook users' emotions change after looking at Facebook, the role played by different types of Facebook posts and social comparison.

The results from this study can potentially help the advertisement team of Facebook decide what kinds of advertisements it wants to attract and put on Facebook pages. The people who get exposure to those ads will be happier and more likely to buy the products. The results can also benefit the public domain by telling the people what all the time they spend on Facebook is doing to them.

## METHODS

- Online survey with Qualtrics
- Research Sample: 128 college students ranging from the age of 16 to 41
- The Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS) was used to measure participants' emotions before and after they browse Facebook pages. Difference scores were calculated by subtracting the pre-Facebook affect (emotion) scores from the post-Facebook affect scores.
  - One Sample t-test was used
- Scale For Social Comparison Orientation was used to measure if comparing with others make the participants feel worse about themselves.
  - Correlation was used

- Categorized four types of positive Facebook events. They are:

- **Life Time Events:** Milestone events that do not happen often, and can have a large impact on one's life.
  - Examples: Accepting a full time offer upon graduation with a well-known firm in Chicago, graduating from college, starting a relationship, and starting a graduate program at Fisher

- **Special Events:** Events that are very special and do not happen often, but will not have a big effect on your life.
  - Examples: Going to the Buckeye National Championship game and witnessing the victory, riding on a helicopter over Orlando, going to a Maroon 5 concert, and skydiving

- **Routine Events:** Events that happen often.
  - Examples: Spending a day in a coffee shop, eating good food, watching a good movie with friends, and chilling on a sunny morning

- **Neutral Events:** Events that are neither positive nor negative. Most of them were from the news.

- Participants are randomly assigned to view a Facebook "news feed" full of one of Life Time Events, Special Events or Routine Events, all combined with some Neutral Events.

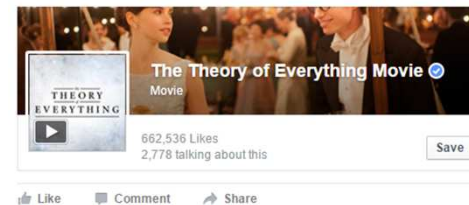
- Events are shown either as a picture with a caption or as a status.

- Participants were asked to think about an acquaintance who posted these events on Facebook.
  - An example of acquaintance: Someone you know during a class, but never talk to him/her after class ends. You are still friends with him/her on Facebook.



## An Example of Routine Events Being Shown in the Survey

Brownies and movies make things better



## RESULTS

- A one sample t-test revealed that participants felt less positive affect after looking at Facebook than they did before looking at Facebook.
  - $t(127) = 5.74, p < .001$
- A one sample t-test on Life Time Events condition:  $t(42) = 4.27, p < .001$
- A one sample t-test on Special Events condition:  $t(40) = 2.4, p = 0.01$
- A one sample t-test on Routine Events condition:  $t(43) = 3.27, p = 0.001$
- Life Time Events had the biggest negative impact on participants' affect
- A correlation is used to test if comparing with users' Facebook friends made them feel bad or not, and the results show that Facebook users do not realize that going on Facebook makes them feel worse.
  - $r = 0.048$
- A one sample t-test also indicated that if people already felt worse before browsing Facebook, this activity would leverage the user's feeling.

## An Example of Life Time Events Being Shown in the Survey



## An Example of Special Events Being Shown in the Survey

## CONCLUSIONS

- ❑ The results suggest that viewing Facebook decreases the users' positive emotional status.
- ❑ Facebook users do not realize that going on Facebook makes them feel worse.
- ❑ When people are browsing their Facebook pages, some life time events might make them feel uncomfortable and less happy if they have yet to experience the same thing: including special events and routine events.

## LIMITATION

- Giving the time constraint, this study cannot be done in a lab setting so it cannot control what participants are doing while they are completing the survey.
- The results are only limited to these four types of events, and other types of events warrant future research.

## FUTURE RESEARCH

Facebook viewing has a negative effect on users' emotional states. Facebook users seem unaware that this is happening, and additional research is planned to shed further light on this effect.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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